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AUTHOR Kuster, Thomas A.
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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1996, the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, decided to ask the administration and faculty to do what was needed to change the small private church-related two-year college into a small private church-related four-year college. The first designated major was to be Communication. The first step in planning the new Communication curriculum was to articulate Bethany's institutional values. Two conferences were convened for the purpose of formally and deliberately articulating the values underlying the proposed communication major. The first attempt to formalize a statement of values appeared as a list of "outcomes" which would function as goals toward which the faculty could hope to move all the students. The list of anticipated competencies was incorporated into a mission statement, which were then developed into course offerings. Religious values underlie, infuse, and impart a unique flavor to all other values. Chief among the risks of discussing values is that differences will emerge. Some differences inhere in the discipline itself and have been issues for many years; other differences emerge because of the religious setting in which the college functions; and some differences emerge from personal perspectives of the individual planners. The curriculum planners' work is far from complete, but they are convinced that it was right for them to begin their planning with an unleashing of discussion of values among them, and that the discussion had its desired impact on their continuing decision making. (RS)

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Articulating the Value Base of the Communication Curriculum in a New Program at a Small Private College

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for the NCA Conference 1997 in Chicago
by Thomas A. Kuster
Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato MN 56001
tkuster@blc.edu

I. Background

In the spring of 1996, the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, arrived at what was for the school a momentous decision. It asked the administration and faculty to do what was needed to change the small (380 student) private church-related two-year college into a small (700-800 student) private church-related four-year college. The modest time-line called for the change-over to be complete in twenty years, by 2016. The first step in the process would be, while continuing the school's strong 70-year-old A.A. degree and transfer program, to add a B.A. program in two selected majors by 1999, with other majors following as the upper-division curriculum grew over the years. The first designated major was to be Communication.

Bethany's Communication Division consists of five persons, only one of whom teaches communication courses exclusively. Upon these five fell the responsibility to plan the new Communication Major. What we have thought and done so far in our planning, particularly regarding the expression of values in the communication curriculum, is recounted in this paper. We do not presume to be a model for anyone else to follow, but present this narrative as suggestive of what another school, if any is in similar circumstances, might learn to do or to avoid.

II. A Concern with Values

Values (which we understand simply as "matters of importance, as opposed to matters of fact") have always been a concern at Bethany, a school whose very existence over the 70 plus years of its history arose out of a religious conviction reflected in the school motto: "One Thing is Needful" — taken from the words of Jesus Christ spoken at the Biblical Bethany and referring to the importance of the Christian gospel

over all other concerns in life (Luke 10.38f). Sharing the conviction that all of their teaching should reflect that gospel, Bethany's faculty has always been comfortable thinking about values.

But that did not mean we were always successful in articulating them.

Our desire to do so as we began major curricular planning was encouraged by the perspective of Barbara K. Townsend and colleagues in the ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 6, *Creating Distinctiveness: Lessons from Uncommon Colleges and Universities* (1992). While we did not necessarily aspire to distinctiveness in Townsend's sense, we resonated with her description of its basis:

The distinctive institution is a product of a social contract among colleagues to organize their efforts around a unifying purpose. Institutional distinctiveness results when both internal and external constituents support the values and vision that drive a college's curriculum and educational practices.

Accordingly, the first step Townsend recommended in the process of curricular planning was to "conduct historical and cultural analyses to uncover institutional values," and then to "clarify, communicate, and act on unifying values and themes." (p.64)

III. The Importance of Articulating Values

In our case, an articulation of the values underlying our curriculum seemed important in achieving a number of practical benefits.

1. it would enable us to clarify for ourselves the institutional and personal values we bring to our teaching task;

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2. it would expand our own understandings of the relationship between these values and communication studies in particular;
 3. it would provide a rationale for decisions regarding curriculum and other aspects of the program;
 4. it would locate and clarify the ways in which our communication studies program would be both universal (non-parochial) and unique;
 5. it would be a means of building support for the program among our constituency who, we expect, share our values;
 6. it would become a student recruitment tool expressing any possible uniqueness of our program;
 7. it would become an instrument for prompting continuing attention and discussion among faculty and others about issues of continuing importance;
 8. in all these ways, it would be a means for strengthening the position of the Communication program in the eyes of the institution and the public it serves. (cf. SCA document "Advancement of the Discipline (December 1996)" at the NCA website updated on January 27, 1997)
- (for the communication major) should emerge from and harmonize with the values of the overall institutional mission statement.
3. *In course offerings.* The types of courses offered in the major represent a "behavioral" (not just verbal) expression of a program's values. This includes both the particular courses that are made available, and the emphases created through requirements of prerequisites and grouping.
 4. *In instructional strategies.* Another "behavioral" expression of values occurs in the instructional methods by which courses are taught. Choices regarding lecture vs. discussion vs. collaborative learning, for example, reflect important program intentions.
 5. *In desired outcomes.* A clear vision of educational goals in the form of the competencies hoped for in graduates will be heavily value-laden. Blanchard and Christ note that, when expressing the value of a liberal education, "the outcomes method is the most tangible and rational measure, and we believe it is the only measure society will ultimately accept." (Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ, *Media Education and the Liberal Arts* (1993), p. 13)
- V. Our Procedure**

IV. How Do Values Appear in a Program?

Knowing of no model of a specific articulation of curricular values, we were uncertain for a long while about what form our own articulation would take. We speculated that values would show up in any educational program in a number of possible ways, such as these:

1. *In a list.* We could simply ask ourselves: what are our values? and create a list. While this would be a useful and probably necessary exercise, it would not by itself be sufficient. Asking an individual "what are your values?" may not produce an answer honest with others or even with self. It is more reliable to ascertain one's value hierarchy through observing behavioral choices, not just words.
2. *In a mission statement.* Mission statements should embody an enterprise's most important values. The Divisional Mission Statement

Initially uncertain how our expression of values would emerge, we were more confident in our procedure than in predicting what it might produce. Our planned path toward articulating the values underlying the proposed communication major was simple in concept: we needed to talk freely about values. What had previously been simply assumed needed to be brought out for examination. What had previously been background needed to become daily conversational fare. What had always been taken for granted needed to be illumined and scrutinized. We decided to make values something we not only thought about, but talked about regularly, freely, and at times, systematically.

We began this task formally and deliberately by convening a conference specifically for the purpose. We invited individuals, both in-house and outside guests knowledgeable about communication scholarship and Lutheran theology for a two-day conference to talk about personal, educational, and institutional values. This conference, dubbed "Building the Nest," was the first of twin

conferences we crafted to launch the planning of our Communication Major. The second, entitled "Incubation," would focus on external concerns such as market niche, the de-sires of prospective students, and the needs of the job market into which our students will be graduating. But we felt it important, before discussing these important external matters, to be well grounding in knowing who we were — we wanted value-talk to be the foundation of our planning.

So we structured the first conference around a set of questions designed to prompt values-talk. As its primary goal, this conference was to explore and describe the connection between communication studies and Bethany Lutheran College's value system. We asked each

conference participant [identified in the box below] to prepare in advance a brief (2-page) position paper in response to a specific question. There was no conscious rationale used to generate the questions; they simply emerged as a reflection of Bethany's perceived value system, which is both religious and academic. These papers were gathered and distributed to all participants prior to the meeting. The conference itself consisted of a series of time-slots each devoted to the discussion of one of these position papers. The input of those who had already thought deeply about such questions, such as Dr. Robert Fortner of Calvin College, were especially valuable. The result was a fascinating, provocative, and heavily value-laden discussion.

Focus Questions for Conference One:

1. Is there a theological rationale for studying Communication as a Liberal Art? (answered by Prof. Erling Teigen, theology, BLC)
2. What particular Christian/Lutheran values can inform a study of Communication? (Prof. Ramona Caer, communication, BLC)
3. How can Communication Studies help us to understand better the message of Scripture/the Lutheran Confessions? (Dr. Ken Loomis, communication, U Wisconsin - Eau Claire)
4. How can Communication Studies help us to understand better the task of the individual Christian in this world, and the task of the church, and how those tasks are to be carried out? (Dr. Robert Fortner, communication, Calvin College)
5. How can Scripture/the Lutheran Confessions function as a critical framework for evaluating communication theories and communication acts? (Dr. Tom Kuster, communication, BLC)
6. What is the Athens/Jerusalem junction in Communication Studies — i.e. where might conflicts arise between scholarship and faith in this field? (Prof. Steve Reagles, communication, BLC)
7. What misunderstandings about Communication Studies might we encounter in our constituency, and how can they be managed? (Prof. Kris Bruss, communication, BLC)
8. How will a Communication Studies program at Bethany be different from/similar to a public university program? (Mr. Dennis Behr, Wisconsin Public Broadcasting)
9. How can a person with a Communication Major serve the church? (Prof. Mary Heins, communication, Wisconsin Lutheran College)
10. How will Bethany's Communication Major reflect the "One Thing Needful," the essence of Bethany embodied in the school's motto? (Prof. Larry Schnoor, communication, St. Olaf College)

By way of contrast, the focus questions presented prior to the second ("Incubation") conference addressed more practical concerns. And yet, in the wake of Conference One, value exploration continued to be a strong theme in

Conference Two as well. As we turned our eyes outward to survey how our program might be able viably to fill a market niche, it had clearly become important that we keep in mind "what Bethany is" — that is, our values.

Focus Questions for Conference Two:

1. Do we want Bethany's Communication Program to be "distinctive" and, if so, in what ways?
2. What options are available for emphasis or focus within a "Communication" curriculum?
3. How broad or how narrow do we wish our Program's focus to be?

4. What do market surveys tell us about the desires and expectations of students in our area as they choose a college to attend?
5. What do work-force surveys tell us about the desires and expectations of the job market in our area?
6. What kinds of cooperative arrangements might be possible/ desirable between our college and entities within the job market?
7. What requirements must our Program meet to assure that our graduates will be welcome and successful if they decide to continue in graduate programs?
8. What requirements involving accreditation might impact our selection of a focus for our Program?

Participants in Conference Two:

Communication Professors at Bethany:

Kris Bruss, Ramona Coer, Tom Kuster, Steve Reagles, Erling Teigen

Administrators at Bethany:

Vice President for Academic Affairs Ron Younge

Vice President for Student Advancement Steve Jaeger

Associate Director of Admissions Jay Roth

Guests:

President, local public relations firm, Joe Breiter

Professor, communication, U of Wis - Eau Claire, Ken Loomis

Chair, communication, Mars Hill College, Elizabeth Michel

Program Director, local radio station, Pete Steiner

Consultant, Mankato State University, Vic Swenson

VI. Post-Conference Distillation and Decision-Making

We had hoped that some kind of formal articulation of values would emerge from the first conference. A worksheet used in its later stages pleaded:

"Help us get started. Recalling the values that emerged in our discussions...show us on this page the beginning of what the 'articulation of the value base of our communication major' might look like — list values, principles, tensions, or whatever works best."

It was premature to expect than any such text would appear at that point. We had begun to realize that a single document could hardly capture what we intended our developing understanding of values to be.

But by the end of the second conference, it was possible and helpful to start a list, admittedly incomplete, of matters we recognized as important to us in our planning. The first version of this list was presented in a progress report to the Board of Regents in the spring of 1997.

Preliminary List of Matters of Importance to Us

1. We are Lutheran/Christian. — Everyone at Bethany, administration, faculty, and staff, has an understanding of the importance of this factor, and a common understanding of what it means.
2. We value good teaching. — As we have specialized in effective instruction as a two-year school, we expect to extend that benefit to the full four years.
3. We are student-oriented. — Every aspect of decision-making, from administrative policies to instructional methods, is justified by reference to benefits for students.

4. We value the Liberal Arts. — The school has deemed itself a Liberal Arts institution for its entire history, and has developed a tradition of understanding what that means.
5. We are aware of, indeed value "the tensions": Athens/ Jerusalem, Humanities/ Social Sciences, Oral communication/ Written communication, etc. — certain conflicting views inhere in the discipline, which we decided to value rather than fight over. (More of this later.)
6. We value critical thinking. — This is a matter on which we have done considerable faculty development in all disciplines in recent years.
7. We value teaching at Bethany (we want to be here, are not looking to move on). — This value was pointed out by one of our outside guests, who noticed what was too obvious for us to see, and reminded us how this might be somewhat unusual, and is certainly important.

As evidence that value-talk continued importantly in the second conference, despite its primary focus on more practical concerns, consider this list of "what we learned" in the second

conference — especially from guest Dr. Elizabeth Michel from Mars Hill College — which was also presented to the Regents, and note the value-components the list includes:

- 1. A communication major is worth a strong commitment**
 - that it is liberating (Liberal) Art i.e., adds value to life
 - that it is practical (marketable, to students and parents)
 - in general, it fills a crucial role in future society
 - in particular, it meets top needs of employers
 - that it is an essential meta-perspective on the 21st Century
- 2. The entire curriculum should be oriented toward student competencies,**
 - that show up on a resume
 - that are useful in many occupational fields
- 3. The program is both theoretical and practical**
 - each class has both elements strongly present
 - theoretical = Liberal Arts not tech
 - students continually demonstrate that they
 - can do
 - know why
 - which connects to accountability and assessment
- 4. The program is unabashedly interdisciplinary**

VII. How Will Values Appear in the Bethany Communication Major?

We have come to expect that there will be no single document or statement which definitively expresses the values that underlie our communication major. Be we do expect that we will be able to express a key (if growing) set of values, both institutional and individual, out of which our program grows, and trace their expression and implementation in the program. Following the recommendation of Blanchard and

Christ (see above), our first attempt to formalize a statement of values appeared as a list of "outcomes" — some of us preferred to avoid the baggage that term has collected by terming them "competencies" — which would function as goals toward which we would hope to move all of our students. This list of competencies was made a part of the Divisional Mission Statement. It also became instrumental in our process of selecting what courses we will make available, and in the emphases and requirements students encounter as they choose among them. In these

ways we hope that the curriculum itself will reflect our values in ways that are clearly traceable. We next consider each step of this process.

A. Listing values as desired student competencies

By reviewing and examining the presentations and discussions of both conferences, the preliminary list of institutional values presented to the Regents last spring was refined and expanded to the point where there was consensus among us that it was at least fairly complete in reflecting our most important values. Here is the list, with brief explanations:

An Expression of Institutional Values in the Form of Expected Graduate Competencies

(no significance to the order in which items are listed)

The graduate of the Bethany Communication major should be a person who...

...understands the challenges involving information and communication in the 21st century

- views the task of the communication specialist (him/herself) as one of sorting through the super-abundance of information available, then distilling what is useful and needed by the general populace, who would otherwise overlook it, and finally packaging it so that they can see its value and relevance to their lives.

...understands the power of language

- is well grounded in the operation of symbols and the philosophy and psychology of language and its functioning, and especially the significance of language in religion.

...is knowledgeable regarding operating procedures of the various communication media

- could walk with some comfort into any entry-level job in the industry, needing to learn only details of operation peculiar to that workplace.

...is aware of the history, economics, and social significance of the various communication media

- has a liberal and broad media background rather than a narrow technical training

...is literate

- can write with good mechanics and grammar in a variety of styles depending on purpose, audience, and medium,
- and
- can read (has read) with perception the important works of fiction and non-fiction that provide for an enriched and purposeful life

...is well-informed

- has a useful sense of history in those areas that underlie the modern condition, and cultivates a habit of staying informed about the important issues of the day

...is familiar with technology

- not necessarily skilled in all the latest machines or software, but knowledgeable and comfortable around the kinds of technology that undergird the various communication media

...is thoughtful and critical

- brings an analytical approach to our everyday cultural environment, and while aware of the expectations of the job market in the media and communication industries, is also able to view them in a suitable perspective and to be innovative with constructive efforts at change

...is ethical

- a lively Christian faith undergirds every activity, and informs a wide and thoughtful awareness of the ethical issues and conflicts that pervade the practice of communication

...can deal with complexities

- while understanding the complex nature of most current problems and tasks, is able to explore them systematically, view all sides with objectivity, and decide when it is suitable to suspend judgment, and when it is necessary to draw on a strong value system to make a commitment.

...is a problem-solver

- can evaluate and analyze problems and develop solutions, particularly those involving people and communication.

...can collaborate

- appreciates the value of diverse views, backgrounds, and perspectives, and can function well in a team approach to tasks and problems.

...can find needed information

- is developing experience and true expertise at information gathering — whether by traditional research, interview, electronic searches, or personal investigation — and at information evaluation regarding its truth, value, appropriateness, and relevance.

...is service-oriented

- sees activities, and perhaps occupation, as a God-given calling, whose underlying and ultimate purpose is to serve God by serving others

...appreciates diversity

- is open to people of different backgrounds, and to views from a variety of perspectives, valuing them because of their differences

...is prepared for his/her first job, but even more, is prepared for his/her last job

- embodies the essence of a liberally educated person, valued upon leaving college, but even more valued when moving into positions of innovation and leadership.

B. From competencies to Mission Statement

The list of anticipated competencies was incorporated as the second part of our Divisional Mission Statement. The first part was to be a

briefier summary statement of intentions, taking into account the advice of Russell Ackoff as found in Blanchard and Christ, *Media Education and the Liberal Arts*, pp. 82f. A good mission statement, he said, should meet these criteria:

1. It should contain a formulation of the program's objectives that enables progress toward them to be measured.
2. The program's mission statement should differentiate it from other programs.
3. A mission statement should define the business that the program wants to be in, not necessarily is in (i.e., they should be statements of vision and of potential).
4. The mission statement should be relevant to all the school's stakeholders (who are they, and how does the program intend to serve them).
5. (Ackoff says this is the most important) A mission statement should be exciting and inspiring — motivating. It does not have to appear to be feasible; it only has to be desirable.
6. (Added by Blanchard and Christ) A mission statement should accurately reflect the educational philosophy of the unit.

We expended a significant amount of time and energy developing our Divisional Mission Statement; at this writing it is nearly but not quite satisfying to us. Most of the difficulty came in finding agreement on differences in individual

values discovered among faculty members. Here is the current version.

The Communication Division will engage students in the study of human communication as a liberal art. It will help them to understand the discipline in its multiple perspectives, ground them in the arts and sciences of rhetoric and poetic, promote in them the capacity for creative and critical thought and expression, and assist them to develop skills for communicating effectively with diverse audiences through the wide variety of channels available today. *Finally, the Division will encourage students to appreciate communication not only as the principal means for addressing the uncertainties of this world, but also the powerful instrument for bringing the certainty of God's grace to all people, thereby healing the divisions that separate them from God and from each other.*

It should be clear how this formulation encapsulates what we believe to be the most important institutional values as expressed in the list of student competencies which constitutes the

rest of the Mission Statement. Some difficulty remains to be resolved regarding the italicized sentence, which is intended to make prominent the particular religious perspective our program would take on the Communication discipline. While we agree that this religious perspective is central to our mission, some feel this formulation makes the program appear too parochial, too special-purpose.

The combination of initial formulation and competency list comprise, we believe, a Mission Statement which satisfies the criteria of Ackoff listed above and, more importantly, can guide us through subsequent decisions.

C. Through mission statement to course offerings

Factors external to values strongly influenced our initial decisions regarding the shape of our curriculum. We are a small school with good but not unlimited resources. We cannot do everything, certainly not at first. Accordingly we decided that the overall shape of our curriculum would consist of these four levels:

1. a set of **"pre-major"** communication courses, all of which are currently in our lower division offerings.
2. a set of **core** upper-division communication courses
3. several sets of elective interdisciplinary **"course clusters"** (two or three courses each) which would permit students to specialize in an area of interest to them.
4. provision for **experiential** learning (service learning and internships)

The interdisciplinary nature of a large portion of the major, we are convinced, is justified by the character of the discipline, is pedagogically sound, and not least, permits us to employ other campus resources most efficiently in completing our Communication curriculum.

Given this structure, then, we addressed the question of which particular courses should be included at each of the four levels? The answer emerges directly from our values, making course offerings and distribution an important and explicit articulation of those values.

On the first level (pre-major requirements), we accepted our current lower division General Education and introductory courses as an

expression of our school's traditional value of a broad liberal education. The pre-major requirements include these courses:

- College Composition
- Speech Fundamentals
- Interpersonal Communication
- Introduction to Mass Media
- choice of Advanced Composition
or Creative Writing
- choice of Logic and Critical Thinking
or Argument and Advocacy

On the second level (core requirements) our course selection proceeded consciously out of the Mission Statement and especially its list of competencies. We created a chart (below) by which we could try to link our values (column one) and their expression as student competencies (column two) to the student experiences, including course-work among other things, by which those competencies should be developed (column three). Finally, the chart will be completed by the design of assessment

strategies by which we can attempt to determine if indeed those competencies are being achieved (column four). Certainly not every value can be traced in linear fashion through the chart, and the degree to which the chart will reflect the realities of our classrooms and programs remains to be seen. But it certainly is a means of articulating our values through curricular planning, and of keeping value concerns continually before us.

Communication Curriculum Foundation Chart

THESE VALUES	UNDERLIE DESIRED COMPETENCIES	WHICH WILL BE ACHIEVED IN COURSE/ACTIVITY	AND ASSESSED BY
def: matters of importance, as distinct from matters of fact	def: understandings, attitudes, and skills owned by the student	def: a curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular opportunity	def: objective means of measuring presence of a competency
The "Vision"	...understands the challenges involving information and communication in the 21st century	Pre-core requirements Core requirements: Information: Discovery & Management Language, Thought, and Meaning Rhetorical Traditions Processes of Criticism Small Group Communication Communication Theory Elective Clusters: Visual Communication Business Communication Media Studies Experiential Learning	
Liberal Arts	...understands the power of language		
respect for discipline	...is knowledgeable regarding operating procedures of the various communication media		
Liberal Arts approach	...is aware of the history, economics, and social significance of the various communication media		
Liberal Arts	... is literate		
Liberal Arts	...is well-informed		
respect for discipline	...is familiar with technology		
Liberal Arts	...is thoughtful and critical		
Christian faith	...is ethical		
Liberal Arts, critical thinking	...can deal with complexities		
Liberal Arts, critical thinking	...is a problem-solver		
workforce orientation	...can collaborate		
Liberal Arts, critical thinking	...can find needed information		
Christian faith, citizenship	...is service-oriented		
critical thinking, citizenship	...appreciates diversity		
Liberal Arts, workforce orientation	...is prepared for his/her first job, but even more, is prepared for his/her last job		

This chart can be helpful in discerning how our current selection of core courses (still somewhat provisional) has been derived from our values.

Following is the list of our six core communication courses, with a brief description

of each, and an indication of which competencies (values) they are expected to implement.

Communication Major Core Courses

COM 3XX-A Information: Its Discovery and Management

- Expanding on the rhetorical canon of "invention," students explore the varying methods of information gathering and initial gate-keeping in communication studies and in the industry. After understanding the problems of information overload anticipated in the 21st century, students consider the role of the communication specialist in helping various publics know and understand what is important to them. Against the background of basic research methods in social sciences and humanities, students are led to consider each communication medium and survey the type of information in which each specializes, and how that information is gathered and processed. Exercises in interviewing, news-gathering, poll-taking and script-writing provide first-hand experience in the investigative, creative, and critical processes involved. Ethical concerns regarding privacy, responsibility, and truthful expression permeate this course.

COM 3XX-B: Language, Thought, and Meaning

- Students will understand and appreciate the power of language(s) by examining theories of how language develops meaning, and how meanings effect thought and behavior. Study of **referential theories** (denotation) includes an examination of symbolizing, naming, and classifying, a look at the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and a consideration of how statements relate to truth. Looking at **theories of meaning-as-stimulus** (connotation), students explore emotional responses to words, especially noting how these can both enrich expression, and provide opportunities for manipulation. Views of the 20th century "language philosophers" as well as post-modern views of language are surveyed, with special reference to their impact on religious language, and appropriate responses are discussed from the viewpoint of the believer in Scripture as Truth. Ethical implications of language choices are prominent throughout this course.

COM 3XX-C Rhetorical Traditions

- This course surveys the history and theoretical tenets of rhetoric central to the Western humanistic tradition, primarily the classical, medieval and Renaissance, through the contemporary (modern and post-modern) periods. Some comparative attention is given to the rhetoric of other cultural traditions.

COM 3XX-D Processes of Criticism

- Students examine and practice the work of the critic, particularly the critic of rhetoric but also including other art forms such as literature, music, the visual arts, and popular culture. Students explore means for understanding various rhetorical and artistic forms of expression, particularly by drawing on the views of theorists in relevant fields. On the basis of that understanding they make appropriate pragmatic, artistic, and moral judgments, which they express in lucid speaking and writing.

COM 3XX-E Small Group Communication

- A study of the small group communication process and the theories that guide it. Emphasized concepts include group roles, decision-making processes, conflict management, group cohesiveness, and variables affecting the small group dynamic (e.g., power, gender, etc.).

COM 4XX-F Communication Theory

- This course explores contemporary theories and processes of communication, primarily from a social science perspective, as they have been variously codified and used to create and critique public discourse. The course gives attention to the nature and process of theory-building.

The inclusion of the course on "invention" (Information Gathering) illustrates the effect of our value discussions. Something of an unusual course, it will be an introduction to the discipline and clearly is intended to implement our values of familiarity with the industry, the ability to find needed information, wide knowledge, literacy, and ethics.

Similar links are clear in the language course, which will help students understand the power of

language, become thoughtful and critical, become better writers, and appreciate diversity.

The two theory courses reflect our value of the liberal arts tradition in our school and in the Communication Discipline.

The inclusion of the Small Group Communication course in the core also illustrates the emergence of these courses from our values. While this is a course that might easily have been

made a pre-major, or simply part of a cluster, the fact that it reflected directly no less than four of our important competencies (knowledge of discipline, ability to collaborate, appreciation of diversity, preparation for first job) compelled us to include it as a core requirement.

It should perhaps be expected that values would be embodied more strongly in core requirements than in electives. On the third level, that of specialization clusters, our initial choices proceeded less from a consideration of values than from practical concerns, such as expected student desires, potential employment opportunities, and the availability of strong interdisciplinary coordination of courses. Our initial three clusters:

- Visual Communication (in conjunction with the Art and Computer Science Departments),
- Corporate Communication (in conjunction with the Business Department),
- Media Studies (in conjunction with the Social Studies Department).

Though practical concerns were prominent in these choices, we will keep in mind our Departmental values as we negotiate the development of interdisciplinary courses with those in other departments. One tool by which we will do this is the brief set of criteria by which we will try to insure that inter-disciplinary courses accepted as part of our major will meet certain standards.

What is a Communication Major Cluster?

It should

- consist of from 2 to 5 courses.
- provide a significant upper-division educational experience.
- support a single central focus or "controlling thrust" which places the cluster recognizably within the communication discipline.
- contain at least one "writing intensive" course.

Proposed Criteria for a Cluster Course (Interdisciplinary)

It should

- contribute significantly to the controlling thrust of the Cluster.
- contain a significant and demonstrable communication component.
- contain a significant theoretical perspective, preferably providing theory prior to application.

Note how the last stated criterion in the first group reflects the important value we hold for writing ability, and the last criterion in the second group assures our emphasis on a Liberal Arts, rather than a vocational orientation.

At present we have not yet done specific planning for the fourth level, that of experiential learning. We have, however, as a faculty explored the matter of service learning in some detail, in consultation with Mark Langseth, head of Campus Compact, and expect that our institutional value of service, as well as our Departmental value of preparing students well for the job market, will continue to inform our decision-making about student opportunities on this level.

VIII. The Infusion of Specifically Religious Values

One might wonder where, in our planning, specifically religious values fit in.

Among our planners who share a religious profession and who take seriously the religious values expressed in the school's statements of mission and objectives, a central concern is the spiritual welfare of our students. We want, without sheltering them, to create an atmosphere in which God's Word can continue to nourish in them a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, religious values underlie, infuse, and impart a unique flavor to all other values.

For example, while the liberal arts ideal emerged from a pagan culture, and is effectively embraced in many secular institutions today, Bethany's understanding of it is decidedly Christian. We recognize the object of study — nature, and in particular humanity and its achievements — as creations and gifts of God, corrupted by human frailty but redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ, and to be appreciated, understood and used for the glory of God and the service of others. Our motive, then, for our liberal arts orientation emerges from a centrally religious value, and we are firm in our commitment to producing a liberal arts program.

Similarly our study of language, while spurred in many ways like that of secular scholars, has the added motive of the Apostle John's identification of Jesus Christ as "the Word" (John 1). To explore the profundity of that designation requires the most thorough understanding of how language works, in the expectation that it will provide insights into the person and work of our Lord. This, in part, explains the presence of a language course among our core major requirements.

We expect that more specific emphases and insights from the Lutheran tradition will find their frequent way into our study of communication. Two examples:

Vocation: Martin Luther found in Scripture clear teachings about "vocation"— that all Christians in whatever occupies them, whether CEO, parent, cleric, laborer, or volunteer, are called upon to use God's gifts to glorify God and serve their neighbor. This value might, among other things, lend a special flavor to our experiential learning program.

The Two Kingdoms: Luther distinguished clearly between the church and secular world, the Kingdom of the Right and the Kingdom of the Left. The church, he insisted, has a strictly spiritual mission, its authority the Scriptures, and its only tool the "Means of Grace," the Gospel and sacraments. Affairs of the world, on the other hand, are governed by reason, and the authority is the state, its tool the sword. Separation of the two, while not always an easy matter, has important implications for Communication studies.

In similar fashion, we expect our teaching and learning will be illuminated by insights from

Scripture relative to criticism, Psychology, Anthropology, and the variety of other fields that contribute to Communication studies. Moreover, we will likely focus attention on communication in areas of particular concern to our church — in families and among youth, in education, and across cultures in mission work. Pulpit and other parish communication practices will be special interests as well.

We are excited by the many ways that our specifically Christian and Lutheran values will find their way into our studies of Communication.

IX. Some Risks in an Open Discussion of Values

While we have argued, and do believe in, the value of discussing values, there are some risks involved in the process as well, of which those intending to undertake this process should be aware. Chief among them: the inevitable discovery, even in a relatively non-diverse faculty, that differences will emerge which will be considered important by participants in the discussion.

To a degree, these differences are important on a personal level — each faculty member has a high regard for the discipline to which a life-time of study has been devoted, and has developed a personal commitment to certain perspectives within it. But to a larger degree, the importance of those personal commitments becomes easily transferred to the program as a whole. No-one wants to see the program developing in directions one would personally reject; as a result, value differences easily become battlegrounds over what some would consider the "soul" of the program.

Conflict over those differences can divide a faculty, squander energy better used for other aspects of the common task, make planning meetings unpleasant experiences, cause some participants to fear becoming marginalized, hurt morale further by leaving an impression, perhaps lasting, of "winners" and "losers" of these skirmishes, and lengthen the planning process greatly.

Among us mutual good will has kept any of the above from doing much more than suggesting itself. But differences have been found. Some of them inhere in the discipline itself and have been

issues for many years: should the emphasis be on the humanistic or the social science approach to communication? Should the program be liberal arts or vocational? Should there be more theory or more practice?

Still other differences emerge because of the religious setting in which we function. Questions are raised about the Athens-Jerusalem juncture in our discipline — that is, are there secular principles we must teach that conflict with religious principles we must teach? Are there communication perspectives and strategies legitimate in church but not in the world, and vice versa? Which are they, and where should lines be drawn?

Finally, some differences emerge from personal perspectives of the individual planners. Should our program emphasize written or oral communication? Should it reflect the perspective of NCA, or of four-Cs, or perhaps of AEJMC? There are differences of opinion in our faculty, I think, over limits to freedom of expression, as well as differing viewpoints over limits of time, place, role, gender, and office in legitimate expression. There might even be differences over the value of studying communication itself.

Clearly all these differences involve values. If they are potentially so troublesome, might we avoid them by curtailing our value discussion?

Of course, the answer is no. We believe in communication, and so we keep talking, especially about differences.

And we have determined to manage at least most of these variants in viewpoint among us by defining them not as divisive differences, but as legitimate tensions, which one will inevitably encounter in a study of communication in our setting. So we are determined to teach them. Let

students study the Athens-Jerusalem conflicts, the church-world clashes, the humanistic-scientific alternatives, and all the others. Let students become fully aware of them, understanding all viewpoints as much as they can, and then let them decide how to manage them for themselves — whether by taking a side, or by finding a balance, or by looking to the particular situation to prompt a particular judgment. In this way, our value differences can be turned from a potential threat to a strength of the program, strengthening students like pre-stressed concrete and enabling them to deal with these issues with perception and experience when they appear in their own lives and careers.

X. What Lies Ahead

Our work is far from complete. We have much still to do in testing and refining our curricular plans. We have hardly begun planning the important value-laden areas of experiential learning, instructional methodologies, and assessment. But while much work remains before us, and all we have done so far is still subject to review and improvement, we are satisfied that our procedure has been sound — that it was right to begin our planning with an unleashing of discussion of values among us, and that this discussion is having its desired impact on our continuing decision-making. We expect to be able with justification to claim, at any point in the development of our Communication program, that it represents an articulation of our particular individual and institutional values. And we expect the experience of building on articulated values to lead us into habits that create a tradition of re-evaluation for many years, enabling our program to grow, to change, and to improve as time goes by.